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ABSTRACT

Background information and a status report are provided on the second-year activities of the Transfer Center Pilot Program (TCPP). The TCPP was initiated in 1985 to further intersegmental efforts to stimulate the number and percent of community college students who transfer to four-year institutions. The TCCP operates through highly visible centers which identify, encourage, and assist potential transfers, with particular emphasis on underrepresented students. The centers, which are operating on 20 community college campuses, 14 California State University campuses, 9 University of California campuses, and 12 independent universities, provide information to students, staff, and faculty on admissions requirements and the transferability of courses between community colleges and the other segments of higher education in California. The TCPP report contains: (1) initial findings concerning the operations and problems of the centers; (2) background information on the funding and rationale for the project; (3) an overview of the basic elements of the transfer center model; (4) a description of the design and initial results of an external evaluation of the project, which includes formative impressions about operations and a discussion of the problems in conducting a longitudinal TCPP evaluation; and (5) a discussion of steps to be taken. (EJV)

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Second-Year Status Report on The Transfer Center Pilot Program

Agenda Item I of the Meeting of the
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Board of Governors of the
California Community Colleges
December 10-11, 1987

SECOND-YEAR STATUS REPORT ON THE TRANSFER CENTER PILOT PROGRAM

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For Information

Background

This item provides for Board information a progress report on the Transfer Center Pilot Program, now in its second year of operation. Staff has provided information on the scope of the project and the responsibilities of the other segments of higher education. An early assessment of the program's effectiveness and recommendations for its improvement are also included.

Analysis

Transfer Centers provide information to students, staff, and faculty regarding admission requirements and the "transferability" of courses between community colleges and the other segments of higher education in California. They were created to increase the number of community college students who transfer, especially underrepresented students.

Initial findings show that transfer centers are operating in accordance with local implementation plans and have good support among CEOs; however, these centers have experienced some operational problems, such as certain resource inaccessibility and internal organization dysfunction, which the colleges are working to correct. There is an additional need to evaluate university and segmental systemwide participation and to study colleges not in the program but which have nonetheless opened "transfer centers." The segments have requested more evaluation resources and a one-year extension of the program in the 1988 Budget in order to meet these needs.

There are transfer centers on 20 community college campuses, 14 CSU campuses, 9 UC campuses and 12 independent univiersities. Community colleges are responsible for coordinating the Transfer Center Project Program and assessing its effectiveness in improving transfer rates.

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Pilot Program Description

The Transfer Center Pilot Program was initiated by the Governor in 1985 to further intersegmental efforts to stimulate the number and percent of community college students who transfer, especially underrepresented students. The program was provided $3.873 million in 1985 and was continued in 1986 and 1987. Of the total amount, the Chancellor's Office administers $1.873 million, while UC and CSU administer $750,000 each.

The Transfer Center Pilot Program is unique in several respects. It provides separate funding to each segment tied to shared responsibility among them for carrying out the program and for achieving results. It is governed by expectations, mutually developed by the segments,in *A Plan for Implementing the Transfer Center Pilot Programs*. It requires operational coordination at campus and regional levels among community colleges and universities and at the statewide level among the segmental systemwide offices. And it involves enough institutions -- 20 community colleges, 14 CSU campuses, 9 UC campuses, and 12 independent universities -- over a sufficiently long period of time to adequately determine whether the program makes a difference in increasing the number of students who transfer.

The Transfer Center Model

As a jointly staffed program, the Transfer Center model incorporates several basic elements:

1. On community college campuses, transfer centers are in specific locations, designed to be accessible to students, other services staff, and faculty, and designed to bring focus and attention to transfer activities.

2. In universities, specified staff are assigned to work with the community college staff.

3. At the systemwide level, each office of the UC, CSU, and community college has a designated program coordinator, with community colleges vested with overall primary coordination responsibility.

4. The systemwide coordinators work with a coordinating committee, known as the Intersegmental Advisory Committee on Transfer (InterAct), which is appointed by the respective systemwide offices, and which includes representatives from all three faculty senates, local staff, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU).

The essential role of community colleges is to identify and encourage students, especially underrepresented, to transfer; to advise students about transfer procedures; to involve local faculty and other program staff; and to coordinate activities with university staff. The essential role of the universities is to make regular visits to community colleges; to assist students with transfer information, program advice, transcript evaluation, and the availability of university services, such as financial aid.

The Transfer Center model clearly assumes that better collaboration between personnel at cooperating institutions, centered around students, will encourage more students by providing them with better, more accurate information, assisting them procedurally with application forms and deadlines, and enabling them to actually transfer more readily, with less confusion, more confidence, and less hassle. Where systemwide policies may unintentionally inhibit local transfer activities, the model provides a recourse for quickly identifying problems and finding solutions.

Progress to Date

In September 1986 the Board received a first-year status report on the Transfer Center Program. During that year, community colleges established the centers, hired staff, obtained reference materials, developed working relations with faculty and staff in counseling, admissions, special programs (such as EOPS and DSPS), and began services to students, contacting a total of nearly 30,000 (more than one-third were minority students). The cooperating universities also identified staff, reviewed their current transfer activities, reorganized appropriate offices, contacted faculty, and began scheduled visits and other activities with the community college centers. InterAct met, and a steering committee composed of the segmental coordinators met a dozen times to facilitate local operations.

These start-up activities meant the centers were not fully operational until the fall of 1986. The Governor, in 1986, provided funding to commence the evaluation of the program, and InterAct recommended, and the Chancellor contracted with, Berman Weiler Associates for this purpose.

This item further updates the Board on Transfer Center activities since 1986, and focuses on the evaluation design and related activities.

Evaluating the Transfer Centers

Design

In consultation with InterAct, Berman-Weiler Associates undertook to evaluate the Transfer Center Program in terms of the goals stipulated in the intersegmental plan for implementing the model described above. These goals were of two kinds:

1. To increase the number of students, particularly underrepresented students, who choose to transfer, who succeed in a timely fashion with the necessary grades to complete the required coursework, who actually transfer, and who obtain the academic information and student services on which attendance depends before and after transferring; and

2. To increase the amount of time and the quality of attention given by community college and university staff in helping students to transfer by, among other things, increasing reciprocal contact and communication, and improving (by changing if necessary) transfer services offered by sending and receiving institutions.

The evaluation design addressed two problems: first, did the cooperating institutions do what they planned? how well did they do it? and what changes seemed necessary to correct any identified problems in carrying out their operational plans? Second, how many students transferred and did the transfer centers make a significant difference compared to colleges not participating? The latter is a longer-term research problem, the results of which will not be known until late in 1988.

Formative Impressions About Operations

During 1986-87, Berman-Weiler began their examination of the extent to which the operational goals had been implemented. They visited all 20 participating community colleges, conducted structured interviews with presidents, site directors, faculty, students, and other staff, and compared findings to local operational plans. They also visited selected four-year institutions.

Berman-Weiler reported their findings to InterAct in January 1987. They found that, overall, community colleges had implemented transfer centers according to local plans. They also found that there were differences in the levels of awareness, involvement, and support among presidents, chief instructional officers, chief student services officers, faculty, and in the levels of coordination with other student services. These variables are indicators of the quality of the envirnonment in which local transfer centers operate and have a necessarily subjective element in their determination. However, they were judged in each case against common criteria and rated for their degree of support, from "high support" to "somewhat supportive," to "low or poor"support. Table 1 summarizes these ratings for the variables noted.

The relatively high ratings for CEOs and CIOs are encouraging; yet, the somewhat lower ratings among CSSOs is surprising, since most transfer centers come under their administrative jurisdiction. The ratings of faculty, given their traditional distance from student services in general, appear very positive. The integration of transfer centers with other services (such as counseling, EOPS, handicapped student services, financial aid) is generally lower than one would desire, but not entirely unexpected, given recent personnel shortages and administrative overextensions.

Table 1
Ratings of Contextural Variables in Transfer Center Operations at 17 Community Colleges, Fall 1986

Item	Results
Presidents (CEOs)	Overall, most actively supportive.
Chief Instructional Officers (CIOs)	Two-thirds were highly supportive; one-third were somewhat supportive
Chief Student Services Officers (CSSOs)	One-half were highly supportive; one-half were somewhat supportive
Faculty Involvement	One-third were highly involved; one-third were somewhat involved; one-third had low involvement
Coordination with Other Student Services	One-third were highly coordinated; one-third were somewhat coordinated; one-third were poorly coordinated

Berman-Weiler also noted that:

1. In ten college transfer centers, directors had additional administrative responsibilities, which tended to diffuse their focus on coordinating the transfer center.

2. Most transfer center directors needed assistance in management skills, and in resolving operational conflicts with other service directors.

3. Many transfer center staff did not yet have access to student records or student data, or to computer-supported tracking systems.

In response to these preliminary findings, the Chancellor, in February 1987, wrote to presidents conducting transfer centers to suggest they review the roles of transfer centers in the context of other services: the responsibilities of transfer center directors beyond the centers themselves; the reporting relationship of transfer center directors in light of local organizational needs; and the accessibility of transfer centers to information necessary for their operations.

In addition, Chancellor's Office staff visited all 20 community colleges and found significant strengths, including:

1. Regularly convened local advisory groups in which university and community college staff participated -- in contrast to prior inter-institutional contacts which were sporadic at best.

2. Increased course articulation activities, with more faculty involvement, and with more colleges reporting quicker negotiation of completed articulation agreements.

3. More involvement on a regular basis of university staff who spend time working in the transfer center to advise students or conduct workshops on university requirements and services.

4. Increased "mentoring" activities with underrepresented students and university faculty and student role models.

5. More focused effort to encourage minority students to choose transfer goals.

Overall, site visits revealed earnest efforts to organize and implement the transfer centers. Implementation problems are to be expected and colleges are working to solve them. At the same time, the transfer centers are developing in accordance with local plans, and have accomplished much in raising the institutional visibility of the transfer function and increasing interaction with university personnel.

The Longitudinal Evaluation

Determining whether transfer centers make a difference in increasing the number of students who transfer is difficult because so many variables affect the transfer process. Berman-Weiler, again working with InterAct, developed a statistical model and data element specifications with which to measure the number of transfer students and their rate of transfer.

However, the measurement problems are somewhat daunting. In a major research report completed in 1984 by the Chancellor's Office (*Transfer Education*, October 1984), transfers were related to high school graduation rates, unit loads, student goals, university program offerings, financial aid, university admission policies, ages of students, and ethnicity. Generally, and not unexpectedly, transfer rates were best among younger, full-time, first-time students than for any other group. A problem in that study was in identifying student "cohorts" -- those entering together -- versus mixing them with other entering and continuing students -- in order to measure who transferred.

Another problem in 1984 was in defining a transfer rate. At bottom, this is simply the number of students in a cohort who transfer, divided by the number who were "potential" transfer students some years earlier. This "rate," however, depends upon how a "potential" transfer student is defined, and on the length of time they take to complete the required coursework. Any entering cohort will contain students with a range of goals, including undecided students; a range of prior preparation, with many needing remediation; and a range of unit loads. And after entering, students may change goals, unit loads, and other characteristics. Such changes are, of course,

partly what community colleges are supposed to facilitate. So, the measurement of a transfer rate is difficult. Many rates are possible. Which one should be used to determine whether transfer centers are effective?

Because of these problems, Berman-Weiler are using a flexible model, in which the "rate" is defined as:

$$\frac{\text{The number who transfer in year } (X+N)}{\text{The number who entered in year } (X)}$$

But numerator and denominator will be further adjusted for analysis as follows:

1. The numerator will be augmented according to the number who, with each year of (X + N), are eligible to transfer, the number who are admitted, the number who enroll, and the number who attend.

2. The denominator will be augmented according to the number of students who, in year (X), were enrolled for credit (less those who already had a bachelor's degree), were enrolled full-time throughout the years of attendance, and the numerical difference between the latter and the former.

This number, combined with additional data on student characteristics, including such indicators as age, ethnicity, remedial courses, financial aid, and grades achieved, will enable evaluators to perform various analyses on transfer rates, and assess what contributes to them. Data from all community colleges will be compared to those from colleges with transfer centers, and results will be reported in the final evaluation in early 1990.

Next Steps

In the course of conducting evaluation design and on-site review activities, Berman-Weiler found that:

1. More attention was needed to examine the activities of universities and of the respective systemwide offices;

2. More site visits were needed at colleges not in the program that nonetheless opened "transfer centers" to see if their activities were comparable to those in participating colleges;

3. More time was needed to complete the longitudinal analysis, since the centers began full operation in 1986, not in 1985.

As a result, all three segments have requested a one-year extension of the program and additional evaluation resources.

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